Teacher Answer Key

Case Study

1. Carlos searched the organization name and found: no news coverage or watchdog ratings (no external validation); no Wikipedia entry (or one marked for deletion, indicating lack of verifiable existence); the clinical studies returned no Google Scholar results (fabricated citations); and the advisory board members had no verifiable academic profiles (synthetic expert technique). Each step independently revealed a different dimension of fabrication.

2. Internal signals fail online because they are easily fabricated at low cost — professional web design is available through templates, advisory board names can be invented, citation formatting can mimic real academic style. These signals evolved as credibility markers in environments (academic publishing, print journalism) where faking them was expensive or structurally prevented. Online, those structural barriers don't exist, making internal signals unreliable without external confirmation.

Multiple Choice

1. C

2. A

3. D

Matching

1-D, 2-C, 3-E, 4-B, 5-A

Fill-in-the-Blank

1) lateral, 2) fabricate, 3) engagement

Short Answer (Sample Responses)

Q1: Vertical reading examines what a source says about itself — its design, its claimed credentials, its internal arguments. These signals are easily fabricated online. Lateral reading examines what independent third parties say about the source — news coverage, watchdog ratings, academic analysis. Independent verification is much harder to fabricate because it requires actual presence and reputation in the broader information ecosystem, which fake sources don't have.

Q2: A single study contradicting established consensus is statistically more likely to be an anomaly, a methodological error, or a result of publication bias (dramatic findings are more likely to be published). The consensus represents the aggregated

judgment of many researchers across many studies. A single dramatic outlier should raise the question of what the rest of the field's research shows — if the consensus is robust, replication failures should follow the anomalous study quickly.

Q3: Comfort with uncertainty means accepting that 'I don't know enough to be confident' is a valid and honest conclusion, not a failure of analysis. It's difficult because our social environments reward confident opinions, and uncertainty can feel like weakness or indecision. But presenting premature certainty — particularly on genuinely contested empirical questions — is a form of intellectual dishonesty that spreads misleading confidence into the information ecosystem regardless of which position turns out to be correct.